THE DAILY CLIPS

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Bus, cherry picker collide

The Daily Reflector

Monday, March 23, 2009

A wreck on 10th Street gave a man in a self-propelled cherry picker a bumpy ride on Monday and broke out a side of windows on an East Carolina University bus.

The ECU Facility Services employee was in the cherry picker's bucket and turning left on onto Founder's Way near the Science & Technology building, according to Greenville police.

The bucket swung slightly to the right as an ECU Student Transit bus was passing on that side about 3:30 p.m., said Master Patrol Officer E.L. Butts. The bucket struck the bus' rearview mirror, then crashed into the windows on the side of the bus as the bus drove by.

"It bounced him around a little bit but he was not injured," Butts said of the maintenance worker.

The bus driver and the single passenger also were uninjured, the officer said. The passenger was sitting on the right side of the bus, opposite of the windows that broke.

The incident scattered glass on the bus and on the road. "They were all lucky," Butts said.

The bus was a 2008, single body model. No word on damage estimates.
UNC scholar has a beef with beef
He says planet, and people, at risk

BY SARAH AVERY, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

With the National Cancer Institute's warning Monday that red meat is bad for people, a nutritionist from UNC-Chapel Hill added his view that it's also unhealthy for the planet.

Barry Popkin, a professor of nutrition, in an editorial published Monday in the Archives of Internal Medicine, makes the case to ratchet back meat production and consumption.

"The costs may be greater for the planet than for people," Popkin says, noting that increased demand for beef, pork and other red meats strains environmental systems, particularly scarce water resources that get diverted to livestock.

His commentary, which immediately drew criticism from meat producers, accompanies a study in the same journal that links high meat consumption with increased death rates from cancer and heart disease among older Americans. The National Cancer Institute study found that for big meat eaters, 11 percent of deaths in men and 16 percent of deaths in women could be prevented if people cut their red meat consumption.

But the individual costs of eating meat must also be measured against the global consequences, Popkin argues. He says large-scale industrial meat production takes too much energy, food and water to remain practical.

Although he doesn't advocate vegetarianism, he says people can help themselves, and the global environment, by scaling back their appetite for meat.

"There is a global tsunami brewing, namely, we are seeing the confluence of growing constraints on water, energy, and food supplies combined with the rapid shift toward greater consumption of all animal source foods," he writes, citing figures from the United Nations that pin 18 percent of global greenhouse gases on livestock production.

Beef and pork producers counter that they are being unfairly targeted.

Dr. Jennifer Greiner, a veterinarian and director of science and technology for the National Pork Producers Council, says the health studies divert attention from obesity, inactivity and a lack of access to good care that are equally important to health.

A spokesman for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association said ranchers are good stewards of the environment and should not be lumped in with agricultural interests in areas such as South America, where great swaths of rain forest are wiped out to create cropland and pastures.

"The fact is, beef production is very sustainable," said Daren R. Williams, executive director of communications for the cattlemen's group. "We're taking inedible forage land and turning it into one of nature's best-tasting multivitamins."
He said there are worse foods that should be singled out as unhealthy.

Popkin, in fact, has done just that. In previous studies, the professor of nutrition has raised questions and ire about high fructose corn syrup and soda pop. He says whole public relations campaigns have been rolled out against him.

"My name is mud to a lot of people," he says.

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Is meat bad?

Here's how scientists at the National Cancer Institute came to their conclusion:

The study surveyed 500,000 people between the ages of 50 and 71 about their eating, exercise, smoking, drinking and other health habits.

Big meat eaters were people who had more than 2.5 ounces of meat per 1,000 calories; small meat eaters had less than an ounce per 1,000 calories.

People had higher death rates from cancer and heart disease if they were in the group that ate a lot of red meat; processed meats such as bacon and hot dogs were especially troublesome.

A slightly reduced risk of death was noted among people who ate white meat.

SOURCE: Archives
of Internal Medicine

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Fired Colorado Professor Defends 9/11 Remarks

By DAN FROSCH

DENVER — A former professor who has accused the University of Colorado of firing him because of a controversial essay he wrote about the Sept. 11 attacks took the stand Monday in his lawsuit against the university and offered a defense of those remarks.

Carrying a stack of books to the witness box, his long hair pulled back in a ponytail, the former professor, Ward L. Churchill, told a packed courtroom about the essay, in which he described office workers killed in the World Trade Center attacks as “little Eichmanns.”

Mr. Churchill said that he was not in favor of terrorism in any organized form and that he understood his comments could be hurtful to the families of those who died on Sept. 11. But he testified that they were meant as a call for the United States to take more responsibility for how it treated others around the world.

“If you make a practice of killing other people’s babies for personal gain,” Mr. Churchill said, “they will eventually give you a taste of the same thing.”

Mr. Churchill was dismissed by the university in July 2007 on grounds that he had plagiarized and falsified parts of his research on the persecution of American Indians. But he has always claimed he was punished because of the essay.

In three hours of testimony at the wrongful termination trial, Mr. Churchill also denied the conclusion by a faculty committee that he had committed research misconduct, accusations that emerged from other scholars after the uproar over his remarks about Sept. 11.

The committee found that Mr. Churchill could not support his theory that the Army had shipped smallpox-laden blankets from St. Louis to infect American Indians at Fort Clark on the Upper Missouri River.

Mr. Churchill said the basis for his theory was enshrined in Indian oral tradition, but lawyers for the University of Colorado said neither that tradition nor scholarly texts made any such claim.

“I had information I could have cited, but I didn’t expect it to be necessary because I thought it was common knowledge that the Army had deliberately infected Indians with smallpox on the Upper Missouri River,” Mr. Churchill testified. “It required no fabrication. The stories were already there.”

Earlier Monday, Michael L. Radelet, chairman of the sociology department at Colorado and a member of the faculty committee, testified for the university that he would have resigned from the committee immediately had it shown any bias against Mr. Churchill. Mr. Churchill had suggested that Dr. Radelet be on the committee.
"We leaned over backwards to give Professor Churchill the benefit of the doubt, to give him a break where a break was needed," said Dr. Radelet, who noted that his scholarly work on people wrongly accused of crimes made him particularly sensitive to fairness in this case.

Dr. Radelet, as part of his work on the committee, was assigned to investigate another of Mr. Churchill's claims: that Capt. John Smith had intentionally spread smallpox among the Wampanoag Indians in the 17th century. Dr. Radelet said he found that Mr. Churchill could not substantiate that claim.

Dr. Radelet said Mr. Churchill's misconduct in that instance, and others investigated by the committee, threw his entire body of research into question. He said it was akin to "a judge who accepted a bribe and said, 'Well, I did a couple thousand cases where I didn't accept a bribe.'"

But Mr. Churchill testified that he was merely raising the idea of Captain Smith's involvement in the spread of smallpox as a possible theory that warranted closer examination, perhaps to be hashed out in the world of academics.

Dr. Radelet said he took no pleasure in finding that Mr. Churchill had engaged in academic misconduct.

"It was just sad to see a person like this, beloved like this, with many talents," Dr. Radelet said. "But he just cheated."
Son aims to aid his dad via graduation project

Mount Pleasant senior Taylor Porter creates 3 devices to help father recover from a stroke.

Mark Porter, left, works with the juxta-ciser that his son, Taylor, right, made to help him strengthen his right wrist, forearm and shoulder rehabilitate after a stroke. COURTESY OF MARGARET PORTER

Two little words strike terror in the hearts of high school seniors: graduation project.

The project, a requirement for graduation, challenges students to study a topic, write a research paper, prepare a portfolio, work with a mentor, create a product and make a presentation to judges.

It's a daunting proposal for any student. I suspect most students begin it with fear and loathing.
One student at Mount Pleasant High School chose to use his graduation project as a chance to help a family member. Taylor Porter decided to study hemorrhagic strokes.

About two years ago, his father, Mark Porter, had a stroke that affected the right side of his body. He still struggles with its effects, especially his right hand. So Taylor determined the product he would create for his graduation project would be three devices to help his father with rehabilitation.

Taylor’s mentor for his project was Chris McGinnis, an occupational therapist at Carolinas Medical Center-NorthEast who has worked with Mark Porter on his recovery. She helped Taylor understand the exercises his father needed to do to strengthen and tone various muscles.

Taylor’s first device is a “juxtapiser,” made from a wooden dowel, wire and a washer. It looks like a game where you move the washer to the other end. The wire can be bent, so the patient can work on strengthening the wrist, forearm and shoulder.

Taylor’s second device is for hand stabilization. It’s a wood plank with about 30 holes and dowels. Mark uses it to manipulate his hand into various positions to help with muscle tone and strength.

Taylor created the last device on his own, developing it with help from McGinnis. Taylor used a plank and PVC pipe to build a means for his father to improve his reflexes and his ability to grasp and transfer things.

As Taylor described the devices, I assumed he was naturally gifted in building. But he said this was one of the few times he’s ever built anything. He said his father helped with the construction, which I think is neat — father helping son helping father.

Taylor said the worst part of the project was the research paper. But he called the project “a blast” and said he had a great time working on it.

He didn’t love the public speaking but recognizes that experience will help him in the future.

He has big plans. He has applied to Appalachian State and Wingate universities and Catawba College, but he’d like to study pre-med or biology at East Carolina University.

After that, he’d like to go to medical school at East Carolina and become a family practitioner with an emphasis in sports medicine. In high school, he’s been a student athletic trainer in football, basketball and baseball, so he knows he’d enjoy that.

Though his long-term goals involve a medical career, Taylor said, the inspiration for his project was his father. How wonderful that he found a way to succeed in school and help his father and family.

E-mail typo

In my column last Sunday, I misspelled Cindy Russell’s e-mail address. The correct address is CindyLRus101853@aol.com (there’s only one “s”).

Marcia Morris: mmorris@charlotteobserver.com.

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Searching for Colleges: A New Equation

ISAAC: A week ago Friday was "Pink Friday" in California, the day when teachers across the state received pink slips as a result of the budget crisis. My high school was hit with talk of teacher layoffs and which programs are going on the cutting block. I couldn't stop thinking about what the budget cuts would mean for my high school next year after I've graduated.

Then I realized: With colleges getting hit hard by the recession, I may experience the same kinds of cutbacks next year—to programs that I consider essential.

The ailing economy, it seems, has added a whole new dimension to my college search, threatening to change the nature of the education I had been counting on.

When I was searching for colleges in the fall, all the colleges would have pamphlets and admission officers pitching why they were the best choice. They flaunted their study-abroad programs, their broad range of courses, their small class sizes and their well-funded student organizations.

But times have changed since then. Many of the qualities that schools advertised when I was putting together my short list may be reduced significantly or cut altogether. Will some of the very things that made a school appeal to me in the first place be gone? What if they cut funding for their radio stations, for example? What if they cut back the English department?

Recently, for instance, I found out that the endowment of one of my top college prospects has been cut by about a quarter. But this is where it gets tricky. It's a mystery to me, and I assume to all other applicants, how exactly this will change the quality of the school in the years to come. While some schools may choose to cut their building projects and research programs, others will cut professors or financial aid funds—and some will have no choice but to cut all of the above.

Trying to make sense of it all, I've spent hours scouring colleges' Web sites for clues as to their financial condition—and if they aren't doing very well, what they're going to cut.

Most of what I find is pretty predictable and not very helpful. Schools talk about how there will be sacrifices—without saying what precisely those sacrifices will be. They talk about how they will remain true to their core principles.

The only place I've been able to find consistently useful information is in the online databases of colleges' newspapers, where students feel free to report what's happening, without sugar-coating.

It can be painful reading. The newspaper of one of my top schools reports that the college is planning to lay off professors in the near future, not to mention the some 50 staffers who have already voluntarily quit. Ouch. What holes will those people leave behind?

Still, even after snooping around college Web sites for hours, there's really no way to tell for sure what will be phased out when I get there and what will change during the course of my freshman year.

With college being as expensive an investment as it is, it's scary that we don't know what we're paying for.

STEVE: I've been worried over the news about college endowments, too. But I have to admit that my concern has been more selfish: What does this mess mean to the parental pocketbook?

It's certainly a bigger question than when we wrote about college costs last fall. Isaac decided that a small, academically rigorous liberal-arts college was the place for him. Karen and I did not discourage him, although that meant annual costs upward of $45,000. I told him to make his short list without considering costs just yet. "We'll talk about how to pay for it after you get acceptances," I said at the time.

That was then. Now, some of the money we had set aside for Isaac's college costs went, improvidently, into a stock-and-bond fund that has shrunk by an amount I'd really rather not talk about. And my job security, given the condition of the news business, may not be what it was six months ago.

I'm thinking it's time we started having that talk.

This doesn't mean we won't let Isaac choose a college he wants to go to. But should it be the college he wants to go to? What if the school he's most passionate about offers less financial aid than another good college on his list? On the other hand—and to Isaac's point—what if the college offering lower costs is one that has cut back on programs that are important to him?

Then there's the question of fairness. Isaac's older brother got a nice scholarship offer from a school in the middle of his list; he also got into his top-choice college, but with no aid offer. He agonized over what the top choice would cost, deferring his decision until I told him to just choose where he could see himself doing best. (He went for his top choice.) It was easier to make that high-minded call back then at Dow 13,000, but still: I hate not to give Isaac the same opportunities.

We have a little time yet. Come spring break, Isaac should have received all his letters. Then we'll go on an epic road trip to visit campuses and see for ourselves whether colleges have cut back in noticeable ways—and whether these colleges look to be the right place for Isaac at any price.

Meanwhile, when the mail arrives, I'll continue to be as ecstatic as Isaac is when the salutations begin: "Welcome to the class of 2013!" Then, I'll be digging through the envelope looking for the other congratulations letter: the one from the financial-aid office.

Steve Yoder is chief of The Wall Street Journal's San Francisco bureau. His son, Isaac, is 18 years old and a senior in high school. Email: yoder6son@wsj.com.
March 23, 2009

Free Room and Board Give a Job New Allure

By LISA W. FODERARO

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. — As a resident assistant at Seton Hall University, Mark Cantine has brokered peace between warring roommates, called for medical transport after a student became dangerously drunk, nudged one freshman who was sleeping all day into counseling and rescued another who had locked himself in his bathroom — twice.

In exchange, Mr. Cantine got rescued himself — from living at home in nearby Montclair, N.J., with his parents and four younger siblings. Compensation for the position was free room — a single, at that — and board, a $10,000 value. “If I didn’t get it, I was planning to commute,” he said. “It’s allowed me to stay on campus and really get involved.”

With the economy in shambles and the cost of higher education spiraling ever higher, being an R.A., as the job is known, has a newfound cachet: 168 Seton Hall students applied this spring for 30 spots, up from 104 applicants two years ago. At New York University, where they use the more common term of resident adviser, the number of graduate students interested in a position jumped to 246 last year from 148. At Clemson University in South Carolina, applications more than doubled in the last year, to 240, while at the University of Virginia, 390 students submitted applications, nearly 100 more than usual.

The position — part therapist, part event planner, part enforcer — has long been seen as a leadership role that bolsters a résumé, but now is increasingly embraced as a financial crutch. Tara J. Hart, director of housing and residence life at Seton Hall, a Roman Catholic university where about half of the 5,000 undergraduates live on campus, said she was wary of aspiring R.A.’s attracted mainly by the benefits.

“When we’re recruiting students, we put out there that if you’re doing this for the money, you will have earned it by Halloween,” she said. “The nature of this job is that much will be asked of you.”

Norbert Dunkel, president of the Association of College and University Housing Officers International, called the nationwide growth in R.A. applications “substantial” and said, “the obvious reason is the economy.” Compounding the crunch, he said, are people like Mr. Cantine who want to come back for a second (or, in his case, third) year as an R.A., which typically is thought of as a one-year job.

Beyond the short-term savings, the experience can also help in an increasingly slim job market.

“These kids learn problem-solving, conflict resolution, crisis management, communication skills and programming,” said Mr. Dunkel, director of housing at the University of Florida. “You can translate that skill set to any career. It doesn’t matter whether you’re a teacher in a classroom or an accountant.”

At Seton Hall, resident assistants help students negotiate the required roommate contracts in the fall. They
respond to noise complaints and report under-age drinking. They log reports of clogged toilets and broken door locks. They conduct health and safety inspections of dorm rooms. They organize at least five social events a semester — a pizza party, perhaps, or a volleyball game, or round-table discussion with faculty.

And they mediate roommate conflicts. And mediate.

Tehmina Qureshi, a senior resident assistant here, joked that the up-close view of Middle East strife she had as an intern at the Pakistani Mission to the United Nations prepared her for the conflicts on the third floor of Boland Hall.

There was, for example, the imbroglio involving a student who complained about an odor emanating from her roommate’s closet. Ms. Qureshi, who could not smell anything, tried to resolve the problem, but the student wound up moving to a different room — and eventually out of Seton Hall altogether. “She really wanted to go to music school,” she said.

Then there was the awkwardness when a student came to Ms. Qureshi complaining that she felt like she and her roommate, who shared a major and many friends, were attached at the hip. Ms. Qureshi encouraged the woman to broach the subject with the roommate — who, it turned out, also felt they were spending too much time together.

“Usually, both have the issue and neither wants to talk about it,” Ms. Qureshi said. “A lot of the problems arise from a lack of communication.”

Ms. Qureshi, who moved to New Jersey from Pakistan as a girl, has two younger siblings, one also in college; she says she is happy she could help defray the cost of her education for her father, who owns a convenience store.

“It’s a great gift,” she said of the R.A. position.

University officials are keenly aware of the stresses associated with the job. Tom Ellett, associate vice president for student affairs at New York University, said he was careful to praise R.A.’s for planning interesting activities and for crisis work.

“If someone is involved in suicide prevention, they get a handwritten thank-you note from me,” he said. “You have to make them feel important, and one way is by listening to them.”

Aware that therapists often need therapy, Cornell has residence hall directors — full-time administrators who meet with the R.A.’s individually every two weeks.

“It’s always a general check-in,” said Mary Ann Krisa, a residence hall director who oversees 16 resident advisers, who in turn oversee 575 students. “How are you doing? Stress level: good, bad or ugly? What’s going on on your floor?” One of the things about working with Cornell students is that they’re all extremely sharp and they’re going 100 miles per hour constantly. But even R.A.’s get tired.”

With increasing competition, the selection process has become more intense. At Seton Hall, students must have at least a 2.5 grade-point average to apply. They write essays and submit references, then have group interviews in which they confront challenges like, this year, planning a December event about healthy eating with a $50 budget. (“We get a sense of how they would function in a team,” Mrs. Hart said.) Then, individual interviews.
Students learned Friday whether they were chosen. Michael Ojo, a sophomore, was thrilled to get picked for a second year in a row.

Mr. Ojo, whose parents live in Manalapan, said he has enjoyed good relationships with the 28 freshmen in his hall, and is especially proud of an event he helped organize with the African Student Association called "Rep Your Nation," in which students of all nationalities shared their culture.

"If I hadn't been chosen I'd be commuting from home, which would be two hours traveling every day," Mr. Ojo said. "It's a big help."